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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8184  
INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION PRIORITY 8220  
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RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 9519  
RUEHBW/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES PRIORITY 6735  
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 3831  
RUEHGE/AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN PRIORITY 0782  
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY 4115  
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO PRIORITY 5666  
RUEHQD/AMEMBASSY QUITO PRIORITY 6449  
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO PRIORITY 1184  
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA PRIORITY 1334  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
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TAGS: PGOV PREL ASEC BL

SUBJECT: BOLIVIA: RECALL REFERENDA SITREP #1 1220 EDT

August 10, 2008

SITUATION REPORT. This is first of several situation reports today.

¶1. (U) Voting on the referenda to determine whether President Evo Morales, Vice President Garcia Linera, and eight of nine departmental (state) prefects will continue in their posts has begun in a generally calm and orderly fashion. Bolivia Transparente, an umbrella group of organizations providing voting observers (partially funded by USAID), reports that 98 percent of voting locations opened and are running without problems. As of 1030, small voting locations began to close as their entire list of eligible voters had voted: although it is not legal to announce the results before 1800, already unofficial vote counts are being mentioned on the radio.

¶2. (U) Although there are confused reports about an unsuccessful attack on La Paz Prefect Jose Luis Paredes (the attacker is reportedly in custody) overall the voting in El Alto and La Paz is proceeding very calmly. An observer in El Alto informed Emboff that a number of citizens who had been eliminated from the voting rolls for failure to vote in the last election are at the polls and unable to vote now, to their vocal dismay. In Bolivia, voting is required and citizens are removed from the rolls if they do not vote, requiring re-registry. In what appears to be an isolated incident in Yucumo, Beni, ballot boxes and ballots were stolen from the notary's house.

¶3. (U) Despite lack of an official resolution from Congress or the President, the National Electoral Court maintains that it will determine election results based on the 50 percent plus 1 compromise it reached with the Departmental Courts (President Morales will still require more than 54 percent of votes against him in order to be recalled.) OAS observation team leader Eduardo Stein told the press in the morning that he understood that the 50 percent plus 1 level to revoke would be applied to all eight prefects by the National Electoral Court, despite the language of the legislation authorizing the recall referenda.

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